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Andreana C. Prichard. *Sisters in Spirit: Christianity, Affect, and Community Building in East Africa, 1860-1970.* East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2017. xiii + 339 pp. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$39.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-1-61186-240-9.

Jason Bruner. *Living Salvation in the East African Revival in Uganda.* Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2017. xi + 191 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$24.95. Cloth. ISBN: 978-1-58046-584-7.

These two studies of Christianity in East Africa are welcome additions to the expanding corpus of scholarship that seeks to uncover the frequently ambiguous ways in which European missionary traditions were appropriated and re-fashioned by African peoples. Both books consider African initiative to have had greater room for maneuver in this process than some influential treatments allow. Prichard, indeed, is bold enough to assert (p. 152) that “scholars of African Christianity have *shown* [my italics] that ‘conversion’ to Christianity was not an act of surrender on the part of Africans or a ‘colonization of consciousness’ by European evangelists.” Prichard and Bruner’s rebuttals of a Comaroffian view of the African reception of mission Christianity both focus on how African converts constructed new communal networks of affect and allegiance. These networks transcended locality and ethnicity as African Christians formed extended families of spiritual kinship, marked out by boundaries of shared behavior, distinctive religious practice, and even dress.

Both books are concerned with the indigenization of Anglicanism in East Africa, but the two studies represent opposing ends of the Anglican ecclesiastical spectrum. Prichard examines the Anglo-Catholic tradition of the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa (UMCA), and in particular the resilient community of affect

and shared memory that linked together the former pupils of Mbweni Girls' School (founded in 1887) in Zanzibar, most of them freed slaves. Scattered throughout the Tanzanian mainland in the pursuit of their mission, these "sisters in spirit" were nurtured by the UMCA as the future wives of those who would become the ordained leadership of the African Anglican church. The reserved Tractarian theological tradition of the UMCA eschewed evangelical ideas of unwrapping the full package of Christian truth by unrestrained preaching to the "heathen," relying instead on slow cumulative revelation of the meaning of the gospel through ritual practice, teaching of the young, and the moral example of Christian companionate marriage. In this gradualist strategy of influence, the role of Christian wives and mothers was of critical importance.

Bruner's book analyses the East African or *balokole* (Luganda for "saved ones") Revival that began in Rwanda in the 1930s and spread throughout most of East Africa, leaving an enduring imprint on evangelical Protestantism in the region, especially on the missions of the Church Missionary Society and its emphatically evangelical affiliate, the Ruanda General and Medical Mission. His principal focus is on southwestern Uganda, where the Revival had its greatest impact. Adherents of the Revival formed their own trans-local and cosmopolitan community of the Spirit. They described themselves as "walking in the light," a state of radical mutual openness and spiritual egalitarianism. Converts entered the fellowship of the light by publicly confessing their sins, putting right their wrongs done to others, and then calling on fellow Africans, and even missionaries, to walk the same path of shocking spiritual and moral transparency.

This radically discontinuous understanding of conversion as a moment in time defined by the public revelation of one's sins stands in stark contrast to the Catholic

gradualism of the UMCA. Although clearly indebted to the victorious life teaching of missionaries schooled in the Keswick Convention, most notably the Revival's father figure Joe E. Church, the revivalists' insistence on the textual biblical justification for public disclosure of sin was disputed by some Ruanda Mission missionaries. Yet, after due consideration, Bruner finally rejects the suggestion made by various interpreters that this emphasis was drawn from the initiatory practice of *emandwa* possession cults. He is thus content neither with exogenous nor endogenous theories of where this distinguishing mark of the Revival came from.

Bruner has issued his own challenge to the Comaroffs' interpretation of conversion as a mere abstraction imported from Western moral economy, but his own interpretation of the origins of the Revival's distinctive account of Christian conversion could have been more fully developed. The essence of his answer is that for the *balokole* conversion was far more than the intensely individual crisis of the European evangelical tradition – it marked the entrance into the fellowship of the saved, a cosmopolitan community marked by radical differentiation of moral values and quotidian lifestyle; to join this community was necessarily, therefore, to take a step of public rupture and disavowal of accepted norms. Whilst such an act could and did offend the sensibilities of elders and political authorities, Bruner is less prepared than Derek Peterson (*Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival* [Cambridge, 2012]) to interpret the Revival as a movement of political dissent against ethnic patriotism. He plausibly contends that Western scholars' anxiety to validate the agency of African actors has led them unduly to identify agency with acts of dissent. One of the most notable agentive acts of the Revival's African leaders was in fact to insist on the movement remaining within the Church of Uganda, an institution to

which some of their missionaries had shown only moderate loyalty. Agency is not to be equated with dissent.

Despite the obvious differences of theological complexion, the Christian spiritual community analyzed by Prichard bears similarities with that described by Bruner. It too was characterized by intense fidelity to a missionary tradition and a strong bond of collective spiritual identity across disparate ethnic origins and localities. Its members, like the Ugandan revivalists, were those to whom the missionaries looked for the future leadership of an indigenous church. Like the *balokole*, it also had its origins in a series of acts of redemption, but in this case the redemption was effected by the British navy from the grip of the Indian Ocean slave trade. One of the most interesting dimensions of *Sisters in the Spirit* is its analysis of the ambiguities of the abolitionism that was so marked a feature of the UMCA as a mission that owed its origins to David Livingstone. Prichard argues that those former slaves whom the British navy handed over to the care of the UMCA in Zanzibar (the majority of whom were female) would have regarded themselves, not as liberated persons, but as those who had found in the missionaries a new kind of master or patron, with access to a network of clientship more extensive and indeed attractive than that offered by the masters of the coastal slave trade. On the one hand, Prichard belabours the “hypocrisy” of the UMCA in its treatment of African labor – Bishop Steere’s great cathedral at Zanzibar was constructed with the labor of Hindu hire-slaves, and the less academically promising girls at Mbweni were diverted to an industrial rather than teacher-training track that bore some uncomfortable similarities to forced labor. Yet her main point is that the forms of dependence and spiritual kinship offered by the Mbweni School were so attractive that they generated intense nostalgia among its former students and a desire to replicate such relationships in the

next generation as the Mbweni alumna became the teachers and “mothers” of the church in multiple locations across the country. If this was “slavery,” it was a peculiarly benign form that generated affection, even devotion.

Prichard’s book is grounded in exhaustive research in an impressive range of archives in Tanzania and a very large number of interviews with Tanzanian informants. It is a richly textured analysis full of fascinating vignettes and stimulating reflection. It might have been improved by some pruning. Chapter 7 narrates the story of a romance and eventual marriage between two young UMCA-schooled Christians in post-independence Tanzania – Gideon Furahani and Rose Limo – and, for all its interest, it reads as a postscript to the substance of the book. Prichard also occasionally puts a foot wrong when dealing with British ecclesiastical history: David Livingstone was not a Presbyterian (p. 29); the Clapham Sect appears as the Clapham Group (p. 31); and the Oxford Movement did not begin in the 1820s (p. 37). But these are minor quibbles – this is a fine piece of Africanist scholarship that shows admirable sensitivity to the distinctive patterns of thought of an African Christian community.

Bruner’s book is less than half the length, and its grounding in African historical scholarship is rather less secure than Prichard’s. Although it will not attract the same degree of academic attention among Africanists as Derek Peterson’s provocatively original interpretation of the Revival, it has issued a salutary reminder that revivalists were not essentially interested in politics – which is not to say that they did not arouse political opposition or carry far-reaching political implications. Bruner’s text is marred by some unnecessary repetitions (pp. 79, 85, 87, 90, 97, and 105).

Brian Stanley

University of Edinburgh,

Edinburgh,

Brian.stanley@ed.ac.uk